

COLD WEATHER INJURY PREVENTION

PREVENTION

- All too often we focus on recognizing and treating cold weather injuries. However, the more important issue is prevention. Consequently, leaders should be trained on the following precautions and supervisory responsibilities to prevent cold injuries:

PREVENTION

(Continued)

- Enforce the buddy system
- Check each soldier for proper dress (gloves; loose, layered clothing).
- Ensure proper hygiene is practiced.
- Never allow a soldier to unnecessarily wear wet clothing.
- Change socks regularly
- Identify and closely monitor personnel who have previously suffered a cold-weather injury (more susceptible).
- Remind soldiers that alcohol consumption increases the risk of cold injuries.

SIGNS SYMPTOMS AND FIRST-AID

- When prevention fails it is critical that everyone be able to recognize and treat cold-weather injuries.

FROSTBITE

- Frostbite is caused by freezing of tissue, normally due to exposure below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Seek treatment even if suspected.

SYMPTOMS

- Loss of sensation in affected area; tingling, blistered, swollen, or tender areas; pale, yellowish, waxy-looking skin.

FIRST-AID

- Warm the affected area with direct body heat.
- Do not massage or rub the area, get it wet, use ice or snow, or expose the affected area to fire, or other source of intense heat.
- Evacuate to medical facility.

IMMERSION FOOT

(TRENCH FOOT)

- Immersion Foot (Trench Foot) is caused by prolonged exposure of feet to wet conditions at temperatures between 32 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Inactivity and damp socks and boots (or tightly laced boots that impair circulation) speed the onset and severity.

SYMPTOMS

- Cold feet, which may become numb; feet may later feel hot with shooting pain. There may also be swelling, redness, and bleeding.

FIRST AID

- Re-warm feet by exposing them to warm air, evacuate victim for medical attention.
- Do not massage, rub, moisten, or expose affected area to intense heat.

DEHYDRATION

- Dehydration, which is the depletion of body fluids, is just as common in cold weather as it is in hot.

SYMPTOMS

- Nausea, dizziness, weakness, headaches, and blurred vision.

FIRST AID

- Always drink plenty of fluids, especially during and after extended physical activity.

HYPOTHERMIA

- Hypothermia is a life-threatening situation caused by prolonged cold exposure and body-heat loss. This may occur at temperatures well above freezing, especially when a person is immersed in water.

SYMPTOMS

- Shivering stops, drowsiness, mental slowness, loss of coordination, unconsciousness, irregular heartbeat.

FIRST-AID

- Strip off wet clothing, wrap victim in blankets or put in sleeping bag, get victim to heated location, evacuate to medical facility.

CARBON MONOXIDE

- Carbon Monoxide is a poisonous gas that is most commonly generated by exhaust fumes from vehicles or other internal combustion engines.

SYMPTOMS

- Headache, weakness, dizziness, blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, unconsciousness.

FIRST-AID

- Move affected person to fresh air, summon medical assistance, administer artificial respiration if required.